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TO THE CITIZENS OF TORRANCE

Some People May Know the Truth About the Torrance Bus Situation

SAFETY ENGINEER'S SURVEY

(IN PART)

March 31, 1944

The Torrance City Council, Torrance, California.
Reference: Torrance Municipal Bus Lines
Attention: Mr. Bartlett, City Clerk.
Gentlemen:

In compliance with your request for the provision of such, we respectfully submit at this time the attached report, also the summary pertaining to the prevailing operative conditions as applied to the Torrance Municipal Bus Line.

In acting upon your request for a closer investigation into all phases of the operation, an approach much more direct than ordinarily followed in our safety service had to be made in the direction of Mr. C. Z. Ward. Since our first association that gentleman has indicated and proved by action his desire to cooperate, and in this instance, embracing a probe which might well react unfavorably, it must certainly be recorded that there was never any attempt on his part to avoid the issue, favorable or otherwise.

In fact, he expressed himself as completely satisfied in anticipating an outside opinion upon conditions defined as causing grave concern with regard to his responsibility to all concerned, at that point on we were given every facility and assistance, so that a complete exposure might be forthcoming.

The revelations secured in this survey are briefly condensed into the terms of our common basic trouble in the third paragraph of this summary. There is also contained therein what we humbly consider a suggestion that will satisfactorily solve the problem, that plan being more specifically outlined later under the heading of recommendation.

Due to the absence of a good system on the proper authority, there is actually the probability that one may witness some of these bad influences even from superficial observation. In this case such proved true in the fact of men being assigned to vehicles mechanically unsound, and therefore unsafe to perform the normally heavy wartime duties expected of them. This being particularly true with regard to braking facilities. Two of the vehicles under actual road tests demonstrating an inadequacy of braking power when empty, not to mention the danger upon emergency whilst carrying loads greatly in excess of the manufacturer's original specifications.

Failure to check and correct this type of condition is disastrous insofar as the driver is concerned, in fact, in due course it breaks down his confidence completely. All too often we find men undecided to what they erroneously consider a background devoid of particular interest to anyone, and because of that belief develop the easily acquired human habit of doing exactly nothing themselves, choosing now urgent the need.

In passing it is considered sufficiently important to illustrate very clearly how the above condition of mind was revealed to the writer, and the Company representative whilst recently engaged one of your maintenance men in a conversation relative to the condition of the expression, extremely dilapidated condition of the Studebaker Pick-up which he was then using.

If exterior condition is the criterion, this piece of equipment certainly warned all and sundry of its probable inability to respond in the demanding of normal control, let alone emergency.

Whether the gentleman operating the vehicle remained indifferent to our identity or whether naturally we generate in it is still obscure. Be that as it may, the views expressed certainly left us a couple of confused individuals, but it is only upon confirming our suspicions upon superficial examination of the vehicle, we were informed that it had no brakes worthy as being styled as such, and no horn or windshield cleaner. The bad state of repair relative to the lighting equipment, etc., was self-evident. In answer to the question as to whether there was a maintenance department supporting the city equipment, we were told there was, but that he didn't report these things anymore. Then in concluding the conversation we were given the benefit of an astounding philosophy experienced in terms of envisaging the vehicle someday killing someone, and thereby because of the costs involved instituting those processes of maintenance which were previously found wanting.

Were it not for the potential grave issues at stake such a philosophy and the nonchalant of its expression might be considered very humorous. However, the effect upon us was that of complete alarm, and it might be recalled that a request was immediately made for the withdrawal of this vehicle from service until it had been made at least safe for use.

Here again it would be unfair to level criticism in any particular direction. The garage foreman under a correct system of individual responsibility supported by records of bad order and maintenance cards might logically be held answerable for the vehicles being used in such condition, or on the other hand, if the defect developed within the periods of normal inspection, the responsibility would very definitely rest with the driver for failing to report same.

In discussing some of these things with the foreman he, too, indicated a sincere desire to cooperate very fully. In fact, with all due respect to his ability and worthiness, one could not help but feel that he was grappling with a problem without having definitely decided what should be done in order to raise the general efficiency of his department, accepting therefore the existence and the nature of our basic trouble, and after having briefly illustrated some effect actual and potential, may we now seek your indulgence for a short time in order to present a still sharper focus upon

some of the costly developments which were exposed during the survey.

In the morning hours of the first day of investigation, on March 27th, to be exact, four out of the five vehicles operated were off the road in a state of bad repair, and in two of those cases everyone concerned suffered the embarrassment of road failure during actual operation. This type of occurrence with all its attendant duplication and general dislocation is a costly experience in itself, not to mention the most logical desire on your part to maintain an integrity of service to the public.

The two pieces of equipment involved in those road failures were the two Ford motor type buses bearing equipment numbers 101 and 102, and the trouble in both cases was located in the transmission and drive units.

Bearing in mind the extreme demands made upon mostly all types of public conveyances during these war days, there might be even with good planning, some degree of trouble expected; however, in the case of your vehicle No. 102 there was plenty of glaring evidence pointing to the fact that the breakdown and the costly repair then under way could have been completely averted had there been functioning some decent system of inspection and preventive maintenance. In short, gentlemen, the expensive and war time critical units then under repair, and whose reliability and long life depend upon, above all other things, good and adequate lubrication, were as dry as the proverbial bone. In fact, the upper parts of the cases housing both the transmission and cross drive gearing were literally coated with fine steel dust off the hardened surfaces of gears, bearings, and gear selector forks, all mutely indicating the terrific punishment taken before the final collapse.

Taken as a specific example it would be most interesting to assemble the complete cost of this repair, tangible and intangible as per the attached cost sheet specially prepared for that purpose by the United Pacific Insurance Company. With proper reserve we believe the results will prove startling. If it were then possible to multiply that total cost by the number of times you may have likewise previously suffered, we would then possess an accurate picture relative to the terrific inroads these preventable maintenance repairs have made into funds that rightly belong in the operating profit column.

In the case of other road failure, equipment No. 101, an inspection of the dismantled transmission failed to specifically reveal the causes as being due to lack of lubrication, but even here the quantity of lubricant was definitely on the short side and delayed attention to the most urgent need. In fact, in not too long a period, have found the units dry as in the other case. Confidence being badly shaken, one must also allow for the possibility that the loss cause of this failure might also be charged to one of the many other indirect causes, which would intimate early correction have produced this climax.

In the matter of equipment No. 105, a White bus, another vehicle at that time rightly considered unsatisfactory for use, and then under temporary repairs, we have outlined in the report pertaining to that vehicle, the nature of the mechanical defect, also the factors of the ensuing costly road failure, the inability to maintain expected transportation, and lowered driver morale. Respectfully submitted it is the writer's opinion that in the interest of all concerned this vehicle, if possible, should be withdrawn from service until such time as parts are available to make it dependable.

The fourth vehicle under repair with generator trouble was another White bus, bearing equipment No. 106. In repair in the absence of evidence to the contrary was regarded as being within the realm of normal maintenance. Other defects found, and maintenance needs observed are outlined in the separate vehicle report.

Finally, and with regard to all the attached reports, we wish to state that the survey was of necessity compressed within limits dictated by the time factor. In order to thoroughly eliminate all possible destructive influences at work, one would need to inspect every vehicle from end to end. However, sufficient time was available to secure abundant evidence that much correction is in order before the realization of those benefits most reasonably expected. In order to attain that end it therefore seems imperative to approach the problem with a truer understanding of its complex and exacting demands, and formulate a sound operational plan specially designed to produce the best possible economy, as against the general anxiety of the conditions now existing.

All this material has been assembled with a sincerity of purpose to expose for your consideration a generally unsatisfactory condition, believed to be outside your knowledge, and to present the broad recommendations for improvement which are of course made with complete respect and reserve regarding your final determination and action in that direction.

In any event you may rest assured this department will extend to the utmost in assisting the continuity of that anticipated improvement of control, by the provision of an always active safety service.

Insofar as the material for recording vehicle lubrication, inspection, maintenance and cost records are concerned, Mr. Ward appears to possess even at the present time quite a varied stock of same, and in all probability these forms could be adapted for whatever plan may be decided upon.

The present controversy regarding the TORRANCE BUS SYSTEM makes it advisable that the citizens of Torrance be thoroughly acquainted with all of the facts in the case, to enable the MAJORITY to determine what action should be taken.

The TORRANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE has been battling for IMPROVED and INCREASED transportation facilities to accommodate the citizens and the war workers and their families. This fight has been going on for over a year. We are not interested in WHO owns or operates the bus system, providing the citizens reap the benefits they are entitled to.

DUE CITY OF TORRANCE BY BUS DEPARTMENT

As of June 30, 1941	\$15,922.50
" " " " 1942	\$27,005.47
" " " " 1943	\$26,360.22
" " " " 1944	\$17,045.02
" " Oct. 31, 1944	\$19,335.61

CHARLES F. KOORS
1724 Huntington Drive
South Pasadena, Calif.
October 30, 1944

Honorable City Council
City of Torrance
Torrance, California

Gentlemen:

This letter supersedes my letter to you of October 16 in which I made an offer of \$14,000.00 for the assets of your municipal bus line. The percentages that I used to compute the ceiling prices of your bus equipment were in error, and the following table sets forth the correct ceilings:

3 White bus chassis, 1936 model 706	\$ 5,550.00	
3 Special bus bodies	10,500.00	
Freight	900.00	
	16,950.00	\$ 6,949.50
Ceiling 41%		
1 White bus chassis, 1938 model 706	2,250.00	
1 Special bus body	3,500.00	
Freight	300.00	
	6,050.00	3,085.00
Ceiling 51%		
2 Ford transit buses, 1941	11,510.00	
Ceiling 63%		7,251.30
Total Ceiling Prices		18,286.80

According to your auditor's report the book value of your bus line equipment is \$12,751.14, and due to present inflated values the ceiling is some \$5,500.00 higher than the normal value. Also according to your auditor the Torrance Municipal Bus Line owed the City \$18,822.01 as of September 30, 1944.

In view of the fact that the City would and should not dispose of the municipal bus line equipment for less than the indebtedness, I am willing to pay more for the equipment than it is actually worth, and this letter constitutes my firm offer of \$20,000.00 cash for the assets of the Torrance Municipal Bus Line. I have attached hereto a Cashier's Check payable to the City of Torrance in the amount of \$5,000.00 as a deposit or evidence of good faith.

In addition to my proposed purchase of your bus equipment, I will assume your obligation with the Crown Body and Coach Corporation for the six new coaches on order with them. I have previously furnished you with a letter from Crown to the effect that I have made satisfactory financial arrangements with them to take delivery of the new coaches in the event I am successful in obtaining a franchise from the California Railroad Commission.

I propose to operate as many of the twelve buses as may be required to give your citizens a better transportation service than they have heretofore enjoyed, and I further propose to inaugurate several additional routes as originally outlined in my transportation survey of your area, with some modifications.

I will assume your lease on your Los Angeles depot, and maintain your contract with Mr. Marsteller. I propose to erect or otherwise establish a suitable bus depot in Torrance for the much needed comfort and convenience of your people.

The present bus equipment would be repaired and painted immediately, and all equipment would be maintained at all times at the highest possible level of appearance, comfort and mechanical excellence. As soon as possible the old equipment would be replaced with new and modern coaches.

The advantages to your community of such a sale are obvious and many. The \$20,000.00 for your old equipment plus your obligation of approximately \$6,000.00 for the new buses represents some \$26,000.00, which money would be utilized for other civic improvements, and your community would still have an improved transportation system.

Your municipal line operated at a loss during the past few years when all other bus operations were showing a profit, and the fiscal year ending June 30 was the first period that the line showed a profit, and had your equipment been properly painted and maintained, the profit would have been substantially less. It would therefore not be unreasonable to question whether the municipally operated line would operate at a profit or loss in the years immediately ahead.

The sale of your old equipment at this time, in the case of the four old Whites, would result in your recapture of practically all of their original cost.

This offer to purchase is contingent upon my being granted a franchise by the California Railroad Commission, and I will expect and appreciate your support with the Commission and other regulatory bodies in the event you decide to dispose of the bus line equipment.

Very truly yours,
(Signed) Charles F. Koors

We are recounting the entire story herewith. It is extremely important that every citizen attend the City Council meeting on Tuesday, November 14th, at 7:45 P.M., at which meeting a general discussion will be presented before the City Council before they vote. The voice of the people will guide the vote of the City Council. We want what the majority wants!

(Signed) JAMES J. LYNCH,
President,
TORRANCE CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE.

THIS FINANCIAL REPORT BY LOGAN R. COTTON SPEAKS FOR ITSELF!

July 1st, 1941, to June 30, 1942:	
REVENUE	\$26,033.49
EXPENSE & DEP.	36,785.61
LOSS	\$10,752.12

July 1st, 1942, to June 30, 1943:	
REVENUE	\$45,159.97
EXPENSE & DEP.	47,055.19
LOSS	\$ 1,895.22

CITY OF TORRANCE	
MUNICIPAL BUS LINES—PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT	
JULY 1, 1943 TO JUNE 30, 1944	
REVENUE	
Fares	61,230.99
Tickets	4,927.50
Advertising	901.75
Miscellaneous	215.48
Agents' sales—Tickets & Fares	7,752.56
Total Revenue	74,428.41
EXPENSE	
Advertising	26.00
Gas, Oil & Grease	8,258.56
Insurance	3,674.39
Maintenance Expense—General	945.22
Maintenance Exp.—Buses	6,484.86
Maintenance Labor—General	2,646.94
Maintenance Labor—Buses	4,965.97
Miscellaneous Supplies & Expense	393.91
Office & Printing Supplies	1,862.16
Refunds	54.26
Salaries	2,635.75
Salary & Expense—Transportation Engineer	1,451.24
Telephone	91.32
Wages—Drivers	24,240.50
Tires & Tubes	55.00
Commissions to Agents	1,692.93
Terminal Expense	1,507.85
Terminal Rental	112.04
Battery Expense	1,013.67
Cartage Tax	56.19
	4.29
Total Expense before Depreciation	62,003.47
Net Profit before Depreciation	12,424.94
Less: Depreciation Expense	6,139.47
NET PROFIT—JULY 1, 1943 TO JUNE 30, 1944	6,285.47

CITY OF TORRANCE	
MUNICIPAL BUS LINES—PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT	
JULY 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 1944	
REVENUE	
Fares	9,185.88
Tickets & Books	10,203.45
Miscellaneous	66.09
Total Revenue	19,455.42
EXPENSE	
Advertising	181.20
Gas, Oil & Grease	1,780.87
Insurance	2,038.41
Maintenance Exp.—General	234.55
Maintenance Exp.—Buses	578.99
Maintenance Labor—General	860.23
Maintenance Labor—Buses	1,378.72
Office Supplies & Expense	141.91
Refunds	150.57
Salaries	2,915.00
Salary & Exp.—Transportation Engineer	928.84
Telephone	1,112.72
Wages—Drivers	255.75
Tires & Tubes	6,245.56
Commissions	276.81
Terminal Rental	777.18
Terminal Expense	150.00
Battery Expense	950.37
Cartage Tax	59.39
	53
Expenses—Excluding Depreciation	17,875.65
Profit—Not including Depreciation	1,579.77
Estimated Depreciation	1,691.24
NET LOSS FOR PERIOD	111.47